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Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals

Role of the Statistical Office in Slovenia in defining and reporting of different sets of indicators

Note by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Summary

The paper introduces Slovenia's experience with measuring well-being and issues relating to Sustainable Development Goals. The paper describes the process of defining a national set of well-being indicators using the "Conference of European Statisticians' Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development". The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia developed the national set in collaboration with the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, Environmental Agency and National Institute for Public Health. The paper also touches upon the work of a national inter-governmental working group which is preparing and reviewing Slovenian input to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

The paper is presented for discussion to the Conference of European Statisticians' first session of the seminar "Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals".

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I. Measuring well-being in Slovenia

1. In 2012, the initiative to measure well-being in Slovenia was launched by the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development. For the implementation of the project a consortium of four institutions was established, including the Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS), National Institute for Public Health and the Slovenian Environment Agency.

2. The project aimed at developing indicators of well-being in Slovenia taking into account the data needs of different groups of stakeholders: policymakers, journalists, researchers and general public. This approach required the readiness to use different levels of communication ranging from an easily understandable visual presentation and short written explanations of trends to thorough theoretical and methodological descriptions.

II. Concept of well-being, sustainable development and links between both

3. The theoretical background of well-being in the literature is expressed as prosperity, well-being and quality of life which as a rule appear as synonyms and include a wide range of factors. The scope of well-being is interdisciplinary covering various scientific fields (economy, sociology, psychology, medicine, etc.), and it deals with the people's lives, their feelings and issues affecting them.

4. Here the "definition" of sustainable development is derived from the Brundtland report which defines sustainable development as a development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

5. Although the concepts of well-being and sustainable development are fundamentally different, in recent years the interconnections of both concepts were studied and implemented in theory and in practice.

6. In determining the concept of measuring well-being in Slovenia, the existing concept of well-being was extended with elements of sustainability. This means that Slovenia established a system of indicators covering all important factors of well-being of the current generation, with some selected indicators measuring also the potential for the well-being of future generations.

7. Three main dimensions of well-being were identified:

(a) The dimension of material well-being included, in addition to income, indicators that measure the living standards. It also considers unemployment, although unemployment may also be an indicator of social well-being as a key element of social cohesion;

(b) The dimension of social well-being included intangible indicators measuring subjective well-being of individuals;

(c) The dimension of environment is based on a system called environmental well-being which combines elements of the local environment and the sustainability of well-being and includes natural resources directly linked to human well-being.

8. Each main dimension includes subsections; namely material well-being includes subsections on income, wealth and economic security, poverty and social exclusion, consumption, work, employment and housing. Social well-being includes subsections on

life satisfaction, health, education, social environment, personal safety, communication, culture and leisure. Environmental well-being consists of subsections on land and ecosystems, air, water, climate, energy resources, non-energy resources and waste.

9. The *Conference of the European Statisticians Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development (CES Recommendations)* supported the discussion about the conceptual framework for the well-being indicators in Slovenia. The Slovenian team cross-checked their draft list of indicators with the set of indicators proposed by the CES Recommendations and found that 13 out of 20 leading indicators proposed in Slovenia matched with the indicators of the small set of 24 indicators in the CES Recommendations. In further discussions and refinements of well-being indicators for Slovenia, the CES Recommendations were used as a valuable methodological guide and reference point.

III. Role of the national statistical office and other partners

10. The set of well-being indicators in Slovenia was established on the basis of the following criteria:

(a) Expressive power of the indicator;

(b) General awareness and sound methodological structure of the indicator; and

(c) Availability of data.

11. For some aspects of well-being appropriate indicators were not found and they were replaced with proxies. This was the case mainly for the indicators of economic security and economic and financial capital in the dimension of material well-being, as well as for time use and social climate indicators in the dimension of social well-being. As the methodological knowledge and data availability improve, more relevant indicators will be gradually acquired to replace the proxies. At the moment, one headline indicator and a number of supportive indicators (from 1 to 8 indicators) were selected for each subsection.

12. Data sources for the indicators vary. The majority of data was in fact the official statistical data produced by SORS, some of them was official statistics produced by National Institute for Public Health which is the other national authority responsible for the development, production and dissemination of statistics. Other data sources were: Slovenian Environment Agency, Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre and its Slovenian Public Opinion Survey, Public Opinion and Mass Communication Research Centre and its European Social Survey, State Election Commission, National Assembly, Agricultural Institute of Slovenia and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia.

13. Although data sources were mixed, the role of SORS in the group was strong not only as a data provider but also because of the comprehensive methodological knowledge and systematic approach to data dissemination. The important input of other partners of the group was, beside the preparation of non-statistical data, writing the expert comments and judgments about the indicator trends linked to the current policies and strategies in Slovenia.

14. Data sets and graphical presentations were prepared for each indicator, together with comments about the trends and evaluation of the trends – positive, negative, neutral.

15. Furthermore, methodological information sheet was prepared for each indicator containing the indicator ID, definition, interpretation and rationale for the indicator selection, dimension and distribution, data source in Slovenia, data source of international comparison data, proposals for improvement, references and contact person(s).

16. After nearly two years of work the group presented the results of the project on the website http://www.kazalniki-blaginje.gov.si/ (available for now only in Slovene). Well-being indicators for Slovenia are divided in three main sections, 20 subsections with 20

headline indicators and 72 supportive indicators which provide an overall description of the living standards and quality of life in the society and considering the environment.

IV. Pilot testing of CES Recommendations

17. SORS participated in the pilot testing of the CES Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development. The list of well-being indicators for Slovenia was compared to the recommended list of indicators. There is a strong overlap of many themes such as health, labour, education, physical safety, trust and institutions. It was established that Slovenia produces 66% of the CES indicators and that the majority of the indicators are produced by SORS.

V. National inter-governmental Sustainable Development Goals working group

18. In 2014, SORS was involved in the work of a national inter-governmental working group which was preparing and reviewing the Slovenian input to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. This enabled the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia to have a broad overview and influence in the process of establishing different sets of indicators, as well as to have an early indication of data availability and new data needs.

VI. Conclusion

19. The paper described how the CES Recommendations were applied in the project of establishing Slovenian well-being indicators. The CES Recommendations provided a valuable methodological guide and reference point during this work. The role of SORS in the project was related not only to statistical data but also to the methodological support and cooperation with non-official data producers. The experiences from the project are very positive and could serve as a good practice also in the future as long as the roles of the partners are clearly defined and limitations respected.